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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LALOTA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 27, 2023.

I hereby appoint the Honorable NICK LALOTA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 9, 2023, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

HORRIFIC CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT CHILD LABOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. SCHOLTEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the House floor to bring attention to the horrific conditions of migrant child labor happening right here in the United States of America and to urge my colleagues to stand with me and bring solutions to this appalling state of affairs. I represent west Michigan where many of these migrant children reside.

As an attorney who has spent my entire career fighting to make our immigration laws more just, more fair, more humane, and as a mother, I will not stand by as this tragedy continues. These are my constituents, these are my kids, and I will protect them with everything I have.

This weekend, The New York Times published a stunning expose shining a light on the scores of migrant children currently working on our farms, our factories, and at some of the most dangerous sites in our country. These children, some as young as 12, are working marathon shifts, often with dangerous machinery to package our foods, sew our clothes, and build our homes. The industries that employ them turn a blind eye to these children's suffering, and often seek out and willingly participate in this despicable practice.

In case I did not make myself clear, Mr. Speaker, these are children.

Stories of kids dropping out of school, collapsing from exhaustion, and even losing limbs to machinery are the things that one might expect to find in a Charles Dickens or Upton Sinclair novel, but not an account of everyday life in America in 2023; surely not here, in the land of the free, where child labor protections have been on the books for nearly a century; not in the country that holds itself up as the paragon of democracy, guaranteeing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

And yet right here, Mr. Speaker, we are exploiting minors from other countries, children in an already vulnerable situation, to do dangerous work for low pay that often results in life-changing injuries. Those allowing these practices to continue should be ashamed of themselves.

The company at the center of this article, Heartside Foods, which packages the breakfast cereals and snacks many of us have in our cupboards right now, proudly proclaims that 25 percent

of their employees have been with the company for over a decade. I wonder if they have similar statistics they could share with us about how many of their employees were even alive a decade ago.

Many of us in this room are parents. I have two young children of my own, the same age as some of these kids in these stories. My heart aches for these children. As a mother myself, rest assured, I am approaching this problem with the urgency and ferocity that it deserves. I wouldn't walk away from my own children in these factories, and I sure as hell am not going to walk away from someone else's children.

As soon as I read this story, I immediately picked up the phone and started demanding answers and action. I called the White House, HHS, and DOL. This is a multilevel, multisystem failure that created the shadows where these children can be exploited, and we need a multilevel, multisystem approach to fix it.

I have called on the administration to create an interagency task force to ensure—ensure that this kind of child exploitation cannot happen in the United States. We, as a Congress, must also act. That means, first and foremost, holding the companies accountable with every tool at our disposal. It also means conducting oversight of the agencies responsible for enforcing these laws and ensuring they have the resources to protect the kids. What could possibly be a higher priority?

At the heart of this matter, though, is that we need long-term solutions. We need comprehensive immigration reform that addresses the root cause of this problem. I know most of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle would agree that reform is long overdue.

We need reform that addresses the border security, provides sufficient pathways for individuals to come to the United States of America, and addresses the root cause of migration.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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